



MOREHEAD STATE BELL TOWER WALL DRAWS CRITICISM



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MOREHEAD -- What Morehead State University wanted was a "visual pathway" linking its library and bell tower.

What it got, critics say, is a \$100,000 concrete structure that mars one of the prettiest spots on campus. It also got a boatload of headaches over how to minimize the damage.

At issue is the new Bell Tower Plaza, which has terraces, a seating area and ramps for the handicapped that were designed to complement a bell tower that opened in 1997.

The problem is that the plaza has walls that reach 10 feet high in places, drawing complaints that it blocks the view of the campus library, a Collegiate Gothic style building that's on the National Register of Historic Places. Others say the austere plaza walls clash with the campus' older buildings.

Earlier this year, more than 200 students and faculty signed petitions objecting to the plaza. Students interviewed this week said they remain unimpressed.

"I think it's an eyesore, honestly," said senior Corbett Ferguson of Cincinnati. "I think it takes away from the buildings and the architecture that are already here."

"It's definitely out of place," said senior Nicholas Basham of Franklin Furnace, Ohio. "I think things looked fine the way they were with just the general campus green."

University officials aren't happy with the way the plaza looks either.

"Our whole goal has always been to have a beautiful campus," said Pauline Young, the university's communications director. "We were just disappointed, the way it looks now."

University officials asked an architectural firm to come up with a design that would improve the new plaza's appearance.

But the price tag -- \$16,000 to remove the top of the wall, about \$50,000 to make other improvements to the plaza -- drew more protests.

The campus newspaper, The Trailblazer, said the university shouldn't spend money to lower the wall. "Neither students nor taxpayers should have to pay for a mistake in a construction project the majority of the student body didn't want in the first place," an editorial said.

This week, in the plaza's shadow, students complained about its cost. "I think it's a horrible waste of money," said senior Michelle Napier of Louisa.

Even students who like the way the plaza looks are grumbling about the price tag.

"It's pretty, but I think they could've spent the money on something else," said sophomore Alisha Christy of Ashland.

Students complain that the expenses are inappropriate at a time when tuition and fees are rising, from \$1,135 per semester during the 1998-99 school year to \$1,220 this year and \$1,255 next year.

University officials have listened to the criticism. After meeting with faculty and student leaders, they have decided to leave the wall up. But they'll put more shrubs in front of it.

"We're hoping that will soften the appearance," said Porter Dailey, vice president for fiscal affairs.

Estimated cost for the new plants: \$1,000.

Caption:

FRANK ANDERSON/ STAFF **Morehead State University** students walk in front of the Bell Tower Plaza wall, which some students and officials say is an eyesore. In lieu of taking down the wall, the university plans \$1,000 in new landscaping.